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## Two Project Players and a Kilted Kiwi with a Granny from Fife: (Re)presenting Scotland at the 2015 Rugby World Cup

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### Abstract

Research into the representation of national identities in international sport has developed markedly in the last twenty years. Much of this has focused on the print media portrayal of national identities in mega-events like the Olympic Games and the Football World Cup. This paper looks at the ways in which rugby union players representing Scotland at the 2015 Rugby World Cup were portrayed across four newspapers during the six weeks of the tournament. It considers the ways in which national identities came into focus through newspaper narratives focusing on three members of the Scotland team who were born outside of that nation. This work highlights the contested terrain of the rules around player eligibility and broader notions of acceptance of these players as representatives of the Scottish nation.

**Keywords:** Identities, Migration, Nation, Eligibility

### Introduction

Rugby Union has developed markedly in a relatively short period of time since the inception of a Rugby World Cup (RWC) competition in 1987 and the open professionalization of the sport in 1995. Yet as the sport has become more commercialized and commodified there have been many changes to the game. This has not always been looked upon positively as can be seen from the following extract in the *Telegraph* (July 20, 2015):

The breathtaking cynicism that abounds in modern sport can be summed up in a single job title: International Resettlement Adviser for the Scottish Rugby Union. The job description 'To advise and assist Scottish Rugby with the identification, recruitment, relocation, resettlement and integration of professional rugby players, coaches and other employees (and their families, as required) from overseas, particularly those from the Southern Hemisphere.' Other unions are equally guilty of exploiting the eligibility loopholes but the SRU's commitment to trampling all over the traditional principles of international rugby is staggering in its brazenness.

The genesis of the discontent surrounding athletes flying these flags of convenience is partly based on the historical misuse of eligibility rules within the 'Grannygate' cases where some players were found not to have the family lineage they had claimed to be eligible for the country they had represented (see Harris, 2010). The established core rugby nations plundering weaker periphery nations to improve their squads has also been an area of debate for some time (see Grainger, 2006; Harris, 2010; Overton, Murray and Heitger, 2013). Parallel to this disquiet are more recent concerns that athletes who do not make the grade in their country of birth can move to lower ranked nations and oust homegrown talent. As a result, national rugby federations have been criticized for tracking and enticing 'project

players' to move to a nation solely to complete the three-year residency period and become eligible to play for that nation. These debates are also an extension of larger contextual concerns about nationhood, belonging and identity in various geo-political regions across the rugby world (see Grainger, 2006; Harris, 2010). These elements all combined to undermine the integrity of the sport and were a topic of debate in a range of media across a number of nations.

At the 2015 RWC the appetite for this change was evident around representations of Scotland who had the second highest reliance of any nation on these rules with 12\* of the 31-man Scotland squad born outside of Scotland. (\*eleven of the original squad and New Zealand born Blair Cowan who was brought into the squad after an injury to Grant Gilchrist). Some of these players were subject to value judgments regarding their eligibility to play for Scotland. These judgments by newspapers and former players were aimed at the World Rugby rules (the problem) but were often expressed as critiques of specific athletes (the symptom). This dynamic was articulated via terms that tacitly othered three players by questioning their Scottishness. This othering appeared to be a contemporary issue based upon the broader dissatisfaction with World Rugby eligibility rules rather than anything related to the recent referendum in Scotland or wider geo-political issues.

The 2015 RWC was hosted by England (England 2015) with forty matches held in thirteen different stadiums across ten English cities and eight games also taking place in Cardiff, Wales. Rugby's stated globalization may be somewhat exaggerated but it is a sport that is continuing to develop a wider international profile. The 2015 RWC attracted record attendances in the stadiums and good television viewing figures. It was the most economically successful tournament to date generating an economic impact of 2.3 billion pounds (Ernst & Young, 2016). The competition has changed markedly as the sport has become more commercialised and commodified (see Harris, 2013b; Wise, 2017).

With London having hosted the 2012 Olympic Games and Glasgow staging the 2014 Commonwealth Games, the 2015 RWC was another significant competition in an impressive portfolio of major sporting events taking place across the United Kingdom. As scholars interested in the social significance of sport have shown, the events in London and Glasgow were important sites in the representation of national identities (e.g. Black and Whigham, 2017; Harris and Skillen, 2016; Harris and Vincent, 2015; Poulton and Maguire, 2012). Both of these mega-events were heavily politicised with many attempting to link sport to the independence referendum in Scotland (see Black and Whigham, 2017; Harris and Skillen, 2016) and wider discussions of Britishness (Harris and Vincent, 2015; Poulton and Maguire, 2012). The 2015 RWC was not politicised in the same way as London 2012 or Glasgow 2014, but offers an interesting site to consider some of the key issues around the representations of Scotland and Scottishness in another arena of international sport.

### **Sport, Geography, Scotland and national identities**

Boyle and Haynes (2000) suggest that with its visibility and focus on symbols, winning and competition, sport serves as a key marker in indicating certain national characteristics and is often used as representative of national identity. Guibernau (2007: 60) defined a nation as a 'community, sharing a common culture, attached to a clearly demarcated territory, having a common past and a common project for the future, and claiming the right to rule itself'. Benedict Anderson (1983) focused on the ways in which newspapers create an imagined community of fellow readers sharing particular representations of news and events. Anderson's (1983) descriptor of nations as 'imagined communities' has been applied to rugby union to help identify the ways in which national teams can help foster a sense of togetherness and identity (see Harris, 2007).

The relationship between geography and sport has been the focus of research for a number of years (see Bale, 2003). Shobe (2008) has highlighted the connections between sport, identity and place and explored how the nation plays a central role in contemporary society. Although there has only been a limited number of geographically informed studies on rugby union (e.g. Harris and Wise, 2011; Overton et al., 2013; Wise, 2017), the importance of place is arguably more visible than ever before in discussions of the nation and elite sport.

Sport has long been recognised as an important tool in the promotion of Scottish national identity (e.g. Bairner, 2001, Jarvie and Reid, 1999; Jarvie and Walker, 1994; O'Donnell, 1994, 2012). Yet more work is needed to uncover just who are included and excluded from these narratives of sport and Scottishness. This may seem especially relevant now given the ever-changing political landscape in the country (see Black and Whigham, 2017). A referendum on Scottish independence in 2014 resulted in a No vote so Scotland remains a part of the United Kingdom. There was only one reference to the referendum in all of the RWC coverage that forms the focus of this study. Although space does not permit a more detailed general discussion of sport in Scotland here, we now turn to provide a brief introduction to rugby union and national identities within the global sport landscape.

### **Rugby union, globalization and national identities**

The topic of rugby union and national identity as (re)presented in media discourse has been looked at across a number of different nations including New Zealand (Falcous and West, 2009), England (Tuck, 2003a), Ireland (Tuck, 2003b) and Wales (Harris, 2007, 2013a). Desmarais and Bruce (2009) analysed television broadcasts of rugby matches between New Zealand and France to examine how national stereotypes were used in the portrayal of the two teams. This work showed that, despite the tendencies towards global homogenized presentation, there are still strong local differences in expectations concerning the different types of audience (Desmarais and Bruce, 2009).

To date, relatively little academic work has explored the place of rugby in Scotland. Tuck's (1999) research offered insight into the ways in which elite international rugby players understood the role of national identity in the game and capably highlights some of the important factors around dual nationals that is particularly pertinent to the focus of this paper. Kelly (2007) also analysed the relationship between Scottish national identity and sport and provided a variety of insights from the perspective of Scottish rugby and or football supporters. As is the case in many other nations across the world, rugby union in Scotland is not the most popular code of football in the country and so has received far less academic attention than has been afforded to association football.

Before looking at the specific case of Scotland at the 2015 RWC we now outline the newspapers used for this study and the methods used to analyse the coverage.

### **Methods**

There has been a decline in the sale of newspapers internationally and within Scotland as more and more publications are available online (see Dekavalla, 2015). Yet they still represent an important site for communicating discourses of national identity in the public sphere. The ongoing relevance of newspapers as a source of portraying national identities is considered by Vincent et al. (2017) who note that newspapers are a key medium for observing representations of national identities.

Hard copies of four newspapers were collected over eight weeks (11 September 2015 – 1 November 2015)) and then later over the course of the Rio 2016 Olympic Games. To understand discourses of Scottishness and Britishness within international sport, the newspapers selected for this study provide a Scottish (*Herald*, *Scotsman*) and broader British

focus (*Guardian*, *Times*). The two Scottish newspapers also provide an east (*Scotsman*) and west (*Herald*) balance. These newspapers are produced within the two largest cities in Scotland. For the focus of the present study, it is worth noting that in total there were 1,267 RWC newspaper articles published: *Times* (556), *Guardian* (302), *Scotsman* (260) and *Herald* (149).

The *Scotsman* was founded in 1817 and is published in Edinburgh where it is owned by the London based multimedia company Johnston Press. The *Scotsman* and sister paper *Scotland on Sunday* are both pro union and backed the 'No' campaign during the Scottish independence referendum. The *Herald*, formerly the *Glasgow Herald*, was founded in 1783 and is a broadsheet owned by English media outlet Newsquest, which is in turn owned by the US newspaper company Gannett Inc. It is published in Glasgow by the Herald & Times Group and is a pro union newspaper and also backed the 'No' campaign. The *Sunday Herald* is a compact newspaper founded in 1999 with a centre-left political stance and supported a 'Yes' vote for Scottish independence. The *Times* was first published in 1785 when it was known as the *Daily Universal Register*. The *Times* and *Sunday Times* are both published by Times Newspaper Ltd., a subsidiary of News International, which is owned by The News Corporation group. Regarded as a centre/right newspaper it was a broadsheet for 219 years before switching to a tabloid layout in 2004. Both pro union newspapers provide a Scottish edition and the *Sunday Times* retains a broadsheet format where it occupies an improving market position in Scotland. The *Guardian* was founded in 1821 as the *Manchester Guardian* and is owned by the Scott Trust who also produce the *Observer* which was founded in 1791, making it the world's oldest Sunday newspaper. Both newspapers are pro union and do not produce a Scottish version.

The Audit Bureau of Circulations figures showed average monthly sales throughout the RWC period (July to December 2015) of 22,470 for the *Scotsman* and 22,060 for *Scotland on Sunday* (14,000 of these were sold at full price and the remainder provided free at airports, train stations etc). Monthly sales of the *Herald* were 32,141 and the *Sunday Herald* sold 24,898 copies per month. As a national newspaper, sales are provided as an annual average (biannual for regional newspapers) and between August 2015 and August 2016 the *Times* sold an average of 24,094 copies per month and the *Sunday Times* 61,868 per month. (All sold at full price). Sales throughout the RWC were 8,700 for the *Guardian* and 12,048 for the *Observer* (All sold at full price).

The *Times* had the most RWC coverage and the *Scotsman* featured more RWC articles than the *Herald*. These findings would support the perceived position of rugby union as being a sport more commonly associated with the south of Britain rather than the north, and the east of Scotland rather than the west.

This research framework consisted of quantitatively measuring the recurring themes in each newspaper, labelling and categorizing these themes and then selecting the most demonstrably relevant categories for qualitative analysis. The quantitative findings helped chart surface patterns by providing a statistical rationale for the selection of categories for subsequent qualitative analysis. Discourse analysis has been used in numerous studies focusing on media representations of international sport (e.g. Harris and Clayton, 2007; O'Donnell, 1994; Vincent and Hill, 2011).

Every article was analysed through an open coding process where the main themes of the article were identified and coded. Each headline was rewritten followed by the date, page number and the three main themes or 'macrostructures' of the article (see Fairclough, 1995). After the RWC articles were coded and categorized. Directed by the open coding, reading and writing steps, axial coding was employed to create a direction and frame for the subsequent discourse analysis stage. The themes that emerged from the open coding of the text were then analysed through an inductive axial coding process akin to what Mayring

(2002, p.120) defines as 'evolutionary coding'. Through this process a distilled list of 'discourse strands' (Wodak & Meyer, 2009, p. 47) emerged that highlight various markers of Scottish national identity on and off the rugby field.

## **Results**

### ***The 2015 Rugby World Cup and Scottishness***

We have just had a cracking World Cup, the best perhaps, although I still have a fondness for the 1995 edition, but am I alone in thinking that the sight of South Africans, New Zealanders and various itinerant islanders, especially Fijian wingers, flying flags of convenience undermines the integrity of international rugby and leaves a bad taste in the mouth?

*(The Scotsman, November 15, 2015)*

As outlined in the introduction, within this paper we focus specifically upon the print media representation of three rugby players born outside of Scotland. In focusing on the media representation of Scotland players, these athletes were subject to value judgements regarding their eligibility. These judgements by journalists and former players were aimed at the World Rugby eligibility rules (the problem) but were often expressed as critiques of specific athletes (the symptom). This dynamic was articulated via terms that tacitly othered certain athletes by questioning their Scottishness beyond the World Rugby eligibility rules. The nineteen athletes born in Scotland were only ever identified by their name, position or club affiliation in all four newspapers. Of the twelve athletes not born in Scotland, nine qualified via rule 8(b) (having a parent or grandparent born in Scotland). Five of these had a Scottish parent and four qualified through a Scottish grandparent. Three other players qualified on residency grounds via rule 8(c). The five who qualified via a Scottish parent were not labelled during the RWC and three of the four who qualified by virtue of having a Scottish grandparent were also not labelled. All three players who qualified via residency were labelled during the RWC, with the two South African born men discussed in this paper receiving by far the most attention. The third athlete who qualified via the rules on residency rarely featured in the coverage. Tim Visser, from the Netherlands, had been eligible for Scotland since 2012 and had 14 international caps before the 2015 RWC began. This limited focus on Visser may indicate that over time the importance of an athlete's original eligibility recedes. This is a point we will return to later in the paper. It should also be noted that Visser is the only player not from a core rugby nation and was not consciously recruited with the specific aim of making him eligible for Scotland as was the case with Strauss and Nel. Three players born outside of Scotland (Hardie, Nel and Strauss) received far more coverage than all of the other nine players who were also born outside of the country. In order to explain and analyse why this was so we now look at some of the print media coverage of the three players and show how discourses of national identities and Scottishness were (re)presented in the coverage.

### ***Project Players and the two Bok Jocks***

When national teams resemble the likes of Toulon or Saracens with their multinational squads plucked from all corners of the globe, what then will differentiate Test match rugby from the club game? The answer is very little, and it is time that World Rugby recognised the fact and acted accordingly.

*(The Scotsman, October 15, 2015)*

One of the many unwritten rules of rugby states: If one team can bully the opposition, they will. Scotland have been the poor sap on the beach getting sand kicked in his face for far too long now but that may be about to change with the introduction of two South African 'project players'.

(*Scotland on Sunday*, September 13, 2015)

The strategic tracking of so-called project players represents one of the most contentious issues of international rugby union. Although rugby is popular predominantly within two small geographical cores (see Harris, 2010; Harris and Wise, 2011) the number of players born outside of the nation they represent has been a contentious issue in the sport for some time (see also, Overton, Murray and Heitger, 2013). Of course, in an age of increased labour migration and accelerated globalisation then this is not surprising. Demonstrating family lineage is one thing but the conscious recruitment of athletes with no affiliation to a country to represent a national team has been less palatable to many followers of the sport. In this regard the international game was becoming more like the club game. This also clearly further disadvantages poorer nations and those outside of the hegemonic core of international rugby (see Grainger, 2006; Harris, 2010; Harris and Wise, 2011).

The topic received consistent media coverage over the course of the RWC and within this broader narrative the *Times*, *Herald* and *Scotsman* focussed in some detail on the Scotland squad. In a rare foray into reporting on Scottish rugby, the *Guardian* (September 17, 2015) also considered the specifics of the 36-month residency rule under the headline 'Strauss cleared and ready for Scotland debut':

Josh Strauss, born at Belville, Western Cape, and a product of Stellenbosch University who only qualified as a Scot on Sunday, will get his first cap, coming off the bench some time at Kingsholm while Willem Nel, from Loeriesfontein, a veteran of three Tests after qualifying last month, will start as tighthead prop. All three of Nel's caps came during Scotland's warm-up matches, games a frustrated Strauss had to sit out while he served the final days of his three-year residential qualification.

WP Nel was first selected for Scotland eleven weeks before the RWC and is conferred 'veteran' status when compared to Strauss. The article concludes by noting that:

Strauss is clearly happy under his new flag, 'I recently bought a house in Glasgow, my daughter was born in Glasgow, so I'm pretty much as Scottish as I can be apart from my accent'. World Rugby has already said it will examine residency rules but Strauss denied his move was specifically aimed at making him a Scotland player. 'When I came I was aware of the law but it wasn't at the front of my mind,' he said after the team was announced. 'I'd seen other players do it before me. I'd seen it happen, but you never expect it.'

The press seemingly did not trust the process or the athletes and so labelled these individuals to highlight this dissatisfaction. Overall these representations contained conflation of eligibility and markers of national identity, such as birthplace, family connections and accent. An article on Strauss in the *Herald* (September 22, 2015) under the headline 'Scot-at-last Strauss ready to seize his chance' noted:

With almost perfect timing, Strauss finally became eligible to represent Scotland on Sunday, two days after the Rugby World Cup began. To Scots ears, Strauss still sounds as South African as the day he left the Western Cape for the west of Scotland, but he has adapted in most other ways. 'We're probably restricted mostly by the weather, but I recently bought a house in Glasgow and my daughter was born there, so I'm pretty much as Scottish as you can be - except for the accent'.

The athlete attempts to assimilate and diffuse tensions surrounding his selection whilst noting that he is not Scottish in the important category of accent. McCrone and Bechoffer (2015, p.107) noted that when Scottish people accept a person's claim to Scottishness, 'birthplace takes precedence over accent, which in turn takes precedence over (colour) race'. This positions Scottish accents, which vary markedly, as a significant marker of Scottishness. The importance of place featured prominently in the media coverage of the RWC evidencing the ways in which nationhood, belonging and identity were central to discourses of the nation.

The emotional reaction to the differences presented by the athlete's accent are tempered by his ability to contribute on the field of play. Other markers of national identity were also deployed to construct difference in the *Scotsman* (October 2, 2015) under the headline 'Iain Morrison: Loyalties clear for Josh Strauss'. The article began:

He failed to make the cut for South Africa and shortly after moved to Glasgow to throw in his lot with Scotland. Strauss denies that being rejected by the Boks caused him to jump ship. He is now decked in the blue of Scotland with a huge game against the land of his birth looming.

Strauss is depicted as lacking the talent to play for the 'land of his birth' and so will take to the field wearing the blue of Scotland. The use of 'rejection' and 'denial' also position the athlete as tacitly unwelcomed or part of an untrusted process. The article continued:

It is difficult to imagine two cultures with less in common than white Johannesburg and Glasgow but then again Strauss never was your typical South African. Rather than a Bible bashing Christian he would rather thrash his guitar in a jam session, specialising in music he describes as 'punk and metal'. Ahead of this World Cup he was asked the best thing about Glasgow and his reply, 'the banter', suggests that he has thrown himself into life in his adopted homeland with something like relish.

The use of race, place and culture gives way to stereotypical notions of religion as the player denies moving to Scotland to enhance his career, which is a denial that all three athletes were asked to make. Shortly after the RWC final, similar essentialist notions of national identity appeared in an article regarding the eligibility rules. The *Scotsman* (November 15, 2015) considered the level of opposition to proposed changes under the headline, 'No appetite' for change to rugby's three-year residency rule':

There is, I am told, 'no appetite' within World Rugby for changing the three-year residency rule that enabled South African-born WP Nel and Josh Strauss to don the blue of Scotland and play in the recent World Cup with some distinction. Arguably the status quo suits Scotland who, along with almost every other nation except Argentina and Georgia, now has a formal



strategy of importing foreigners to make them eligible and increase the player pool. The Edinburgh duo of Cornel du Preez and Anton Bresler will both be qualified well before the 2019 Rugby World Cup and the likes of Phil Burleigh and Nasi Manu may also be interested but it's difficult to be exact and the SRU are a little coy about who is a 'project player' and who might simply qualify by accident, so to speak.

In 2015 it seemed unlikely that the residency rules would change given the resistance of many core nations but internal lobbying and a further review in 2016 created momentum for this amendment. This extension of the residency requirement from three to five years will come into effect in 2020 to restore the 'integrity' seemingly eroded by 'project players'. These concerted scouting 'projects' were criticised at the RWC and this dissatisfaction was expressed via labels affixed to certain members of the Scotland squad. Both men were frequently referred to as 'Bok Jocks', a label that combines outdated terms to highlight dissatisfaction with rules that allow both South African 'others' to play for Scotland.

### ***Johnny come lately and a Scottish Granny***

The inclusion of New Zealand born players in the Scotland squad for the 2015 RWC was not a new development. The legendary former Scotland coach Jim Telfer noted in his autobiography that in the late 1990s agents began to supply details of Scottish-qualified players from the other side of the globe (see Telfer, 2005). Whilst New Zealand born players such as John and Martin Leslie, Sean Lineen, Glenn Metcalfe and Brendan Laney all represented Scotland in this period, the first 'Kilted Kiwi' was Alfred Nolan Fell who appeared on the wing for Scotland in a match against Wales in 1901. Fell, who was a student at Edinburgh University, played seven times for Scotland but did not represent the country again after he declined an invitation to play against the touring New Zealand team in 1905 as he felt that he could not play against the country of his birth. Playing against their country of birth was something that would happen for the South African born players Strauss and Nel in the 2015 RWC.

The term 'Kilted Kiwi' appeared on a number of occasions in articles about John Hardie. He was of course not the only 'Kilted Kiwi' in the squad but received more coverage than Sean Maitland and Blair Cowan due to his more recent arrival in Scotland and then his subsequent outstanding performances in a Scotland shirt. The ways in which an individual born outside of the country performed for Scotland seemed to be a key factor in the ways in which the media tacitly accepted his role in the Scotland team. Hardie was not a project player and was eligible to play for Scotland by virtue of his grandmother who was born in Fife. Hardie arrived in Scotland for the first time five weeks before the RWC and was described in the *Scotsman* (September 1, 2015) as having 'only seen 57 minutes of action for Scotland before being selected [for the RWC]'. His inclusion was discussed in an article in the *Scotsman* six days before the opening match of the RWC:

Here there is still some unhappiness about Vern Cotters readiness to take advantage of the IRB [sic] regulations relating to qualification, and, in particular about the parachuting of John Hardie into the Scotland squad. An old friend, veteran of the club game both as player and coach, asks 'what message does it give to the hundreds of volunteers/enthusiasts/parents who have turned out, hail or high water [sic], at Scottish clubs over the years?'

(*The Scotsman*, September 12, 2015)

‘Here’ signifies Scotland and forms an implicit ‘we’ of writer and reader as well as an ‘us’ that includes the trusted and disgruntled veteran. In this case the speed of John Hardie’s arrival is cast as part of the national team coach ‘taking advantage of the regulations’. Hardie featured again three days later in the *Scotsman* (September 15, 2015) under the headline ‘Kilted Kiwi shrugs off World Cup call-up flak’:

Scotland flanker John Hardie says criticism of his parachuting into the Scotland Rugby World Cup squad came as no surprise and that he is fully focused on delivering for his adopted country. The New Zealand born open-side, who qualifies through his Fife grandmother, had been tracked by the SRU for a couple of years.

The same player appears in the *Herald* (September 20, 2015) under the headline ‘Honorary Scot is ready For Challenge’:

He may have been portrayed in some quarters as a Johnny-come-lately who gatecrashed his way into the Scotland squad at the expense of homebred players, but John Hardie, the New Zealand-born flanker, has revealed his move north had been almost 20 years in the making. ‘I remember watching the World Cup games in 1995, with the Hastings brothers and all that,’ he said. ‘I remember my Dad always telling me my grandmother was born over there in Scotland and that was pretty special. Later John Leslie and Brendan Laney played as well so I had a real connection from them’.

Hardie emphasises a ‘twenty-year connection’ to Scotland, perhaps in an effort to deflect from the unrest surrounding the speed of his selection. The Scotland Head Coach at the time, Vern Cotter, is also from New Zealand and other nations were led by New Zealanders including Wales (Warren Gatland) and Ireland (Joe Schmidt). New Zealand is one of the only nations in the world where rugby union is the dominant football code and the sport is very important to the promotion and celebration of national identity in the country (see Scherer and Jackson, 2010).

These labels were only affixed to athletes who recently qualified for Scotland and therefore highlight this speed of selection as well as the differences presented by each player. The labels also highlight concerns about the exclusion of other more deserving athletes and this ‘length of service’ aspect was raised in the *Scotsman* and *Herald*. The *Herald* (September 16, 2015) opened with ‘Kilted Kiwi makes the cut’ and stated that:

There is no doubt he [John Hardie] qualifies with a grandmother from Culross in Fife. But accepting him means that somebody with longer service, primarily John Barclay and Blair Cowan, miss out.

Hardie meets the qualification standard but acceptance is deferred as two other players are deemed more deserving, which again positions acceptance beyond affiliation as a resource that is built up over time. In broader terms it could be suggested that genealogy reigns supreme with residency appearing as more of a problematic issue within the coverage. The same story was covered in the *Guardian* (September 1, 2015) and stated that:

both had been axed from the squad and to add further controversy to that decision, the man benefiting from Cotter’s omission of Cowan and Barclay is John Hardie – who only arrived in Scotland five weeks ago from New

Zealand and has played just 57 minutes of international rugby after making his debut in Turin 10 days ago.

Neither of these two players referred to in the article were born in Scotland but John Barclay (born in Hong Kong) had played for Scotland for 10 years and had 60 caps at the time of the tournament. Blair Cowan (also born in New Zealand) had represented Scotland for 3 years and had 17 Caps. Both athletes have Scottish mothers and significantly 'longer service' than Hardie who qualified to represent Scotland via his grandmother. This lack of time devoted to Scotland was repeated in the *Times* (October 10, 2015) and in the *Herald* (September 20, 2015). Here then were articles with discourse more akin to that visible in the representations often reserved for 'project players'. John Hardie was also portrayed in three of the newspapers as someone who was not good enough to play for his native New Zealand and that his selection had in some ways demeaned the Scotland jersey.

As with the articles discussed earlier focusing on Josh Strauss, the *Times* (October 18, 2015) also referred to a player's accent and noted the following:

In sport, pragmatism tends to trump sentiment eventually, and so it has been with Hardie. When the accent is on quality, we care less about how a player speaks. Double standards? Very possibly, but now's not the time to quibble.

Hardie was referred to as a Kilted Kiwi in all four newspapers, and entering the Scotland team at a late stage drew many references to the players who had preceded him as evidenced in an article in the *Scotsman* (September 12, 2015) that noted:

Moreover, Hardie hasn't actually been slotted into the Scotland side any more quickly than his fellow New Zealanders, John and Martin Leslie, were in 1999. They took the grandparental qualification route to Scotland just as Hardie has done and contributed mightily to the Scotland team which won the last Five Nations championship that season. If he makes a contribution comparable to that made by the Leslie brothers in 1999 the circumstances of his arrival will soon be forgotten, or at least no longer grate.

Talent demonstrated over time is again presented as a key factor in accepting an athlete's claim to Scottishness. When telling the stories of Laney and Hardie, an article in the *Sunday Times* (September 20, 2015) noted:

As Laney himself discovered, talk about nationality tends to die down the moment a player's displays speak for themselves. 'It's like I said to Hards [John Hardie] you've got to earn the right to wear the Jersey. It can feel a wee bit harsh at times, seeing your name in the paper every two seconds saying you shouldn't be there. But once you get out there and prove you're good enough, it probably does dissipate a bit'.

It is reasonable to contend that no newspaper wrote 'you shouldn't be here' but Laney's quote shows that the labeled person feels this stigma. This article also detailed that at that time 'senior members of the Scotland team went behind his back to have Laney removed from the squad', undoubtedly contributing to the perceived pressure of 'earning the right to wear the jersey'. All four newspapers repeated that when an athlete demonstrates their talent over time then talk about nationality recedes as noted in the *Times* (October 18, 2015) with:

John Hardie's right ear is in a sorry state. He cut it open some time in between the 21 tackles and crucial try that were the keynotes of his performance against Japan, and four weeks down the line, the wound still looks raw and nasty. The same can be said of some of the barbs that flew his way in the two months before that match, when the flanker's lug was being chewed off by all and sundry. Funnily enough, his right to wear the Scotland jersey has been less of an issue since he started filling it with distinction, to the extent he's already a nigh on indispensable component of the side.

These representations highlight that acceptance of the athlete 'other' is contingent upon talent demonstrated over time.

### **Discussion and Concluding Remarks**

This study examined how the Scotland rugby team were represented across four newspapers during the 2015 RWC. By focusing on two British newspapers and two Scottish newspapers it looked specifically at the representation of three players representing Scotland who were born outside of that country. Hardie, Strauss and Nel were all labelled as 'imported' athletes by the *Herald*, the *Scotsman* and the *Times*. Products, plants and livestock are imported and exported and by placing the rugby athlete in the same category they are commodified and dehumanized. This commodification is clear as Grainger (2006, p.7) notes when detailing the impact of the eligibility rules on the landscape of world rugby:

Arguably, in the context of sports labor migration, the athlete is reduced to a body, the body to a commodity; and, as such, the athlete becomes dehumanized, quantifiable, absorbed into the world of markets of productive exchange.

Players who had previously trodden the path taken by Hardie such as Brendan Laney and Sean Maitland did so on the basis of a Scottish grandparent. Hardie's South African born teammates had no family link to Scotland and were recruited as project players. It was the late arrival of Hardie into the Scotland squad that meant he became the focus of considerable media attention and may at times have been grouped with the two project players in broader discussions of national identities.

These representations hint at a concerted practice of athletes and national federations taking advantage of these residency requirements. Strauss later confirmed that his agent was looking to find him a club in England and that he had only extended his deal with Glasgow Warriors ahead of the RWC so that he qualified to represent Scotland. Strauss moved to Sale Sharks in England in 2017 and has represented Scotland fourteen times. Hardie was one of the standout players for Scotland in the 2015 RWC and signed a contract with Edinburgh. Yet he was suspended by Edinburgh Rugby in 2017 for alleged cocaine use and it was later announced that he would be leaving the club at the end of the 2017-18 season. WP Nel was considered by many to be a serious contender for a place on the 2017 British and Irish Lions tour to New Zealand but a serious neck injury kept him out of the game for some time. Another injury in the autumn of 2017 meant that he has struggled to return to the form he showed around the time of the RWC.

Subsequent protracted negotiations around the issue of player eligibility ended in May 2017 with World Rugby voting to lengthen the required residency period from 36 to 60 months. This change will come into effect on December 31<sup>st</sup> 2020 and was celebrated by the Chairman of World Rugby who stated in the *Scotsman* (May 9, 2017) that:

This reform of Regulation 8 governing eligibility is an important and necessary step to protecting the integrity and credibility of international rugby. This extension to the residency period within a forward-thinking reform package will ensure a close, credible and established link between a union and players, which is good for rugby and good for fans.

The rugby world continues to change and all nations will continue to pursue whatever avenues are open to them to put the best players on the pitch that they can. This pursuit of a competitive advantage creates an ever-intensifying search for eligible athletes. At the 2015 RWC the unease over who represented 'us' ultimately led to a tightening of the eligibility rules. This entire process momentarily brought the fuzzy frontiers of national identity in rugby into focus.

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